6: Tomasic E-4 (1947-1948) 1953 RF1 Great Russia RF1

[Ivan the Terrible]

In this manner popular religious ideas and practices which might have developed as a response to the interpersonal relations in the family and in the Czardom in their own turn tended to perpetuate the existing social and political order, its institutions and practices. There were, however, other aspects of interpersonal relations intrinsic to that social organization which provoked responses that tended not to perpetuate it, but to undermine it and to destroy its very foundations. These important agents of structural change in Russian society will be discussed on the following pages.

11
POWER-SEEKING, MISTRUST, AND DESTRUCTIVE AGGRESSION

I

A CHILD who has been rejected and humiliated by a stern and scornful father, but who has been spoiled by an overindulgent mother might respond to such a situation by developing an exaggerated concern for his own ego, and an extreme intolerance for privations and denials. And in case the mother cannot serve as a satisfactory substitute for rejection by the father, complete detachment from the group, and pity for an abandoned, degraded and suffering self might develop. In such circumstances also a deeply rooted suspicion of others, an unbridled desire for power, and an overwhelming hate and urge for destruction of all those who stand in one's path might take place.

The life histories of a number of Russian rulers and intelligentsia apparently show such an effect of their family environment.[1] Childhood experiences and character traits of Ivan the Terrible, for instance, provide an outstanding example. There is sufficient evidence for the contention that the strange behavior of this Czar was rooted in rejection and in alternating mistreat-

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[Ivan the Terrible]

[Dobrolyubov]

593 154 159 ment and indulgence to which Ivan was exposed as a child. Early in his life Ivan was left an orphan. His father died when he was four and he lost his mother four years later. As a child Ivan was reared among crouching servility as well as among arrogance, violence, and contempt. He was greatly pampered on the part of some of his tutors and courtiers, but also often deeply wounded on the part of others. Some of the boyars at the court would annoy him and insult him. They would arrest and threaten with death persons to whom Ivan was attached.

In his own writings, Ivan tells us how much he suffered because he was deprived of his attachments and frustrated in his expectations. It is possible, that it was as a result of such experiences that Ivan developed ideas of rejection, persecution and self-pity, as well as an urge for self-assertion by means of destructive aggression. He sought for himself power which was as overwhelming as that of omnipotent God and asserted himself by means of ruthless violence. "My parents never had a care for me," he claimed. He also said: "In vain I have looked for some man to have pity upon me, but have found no one. Yea, no comforter have I found, but only such as have rewarded me evil for good and hatred for love."[2] He felt emotionally very dependent upon his wife and blamed the courtiers for her early death. He himself explained his assassinations of the boyars on that ground. "Why divided ye me from my wife? Had ye not taken from me my *unitza* (heifer—young wife), never had there been the slayings of the boyars."[3] The old documents say about Ivan [159] that "He pitieth not men, nor yet yieldeth. Likewise, he loveth not contrary speech, but doth conceive anger against them who do speak it."[4] He is described by his biographers as "self-seeking, opinionated, ferocious and self-willed."

More recent evidence of the effect of rejection-indulgence is given by Dobrolyubov, one of the outstanding Russian intellectual rebels of the second part of the nineteenth century. According to his biographers and according to his own diary, Dobrolyubov was thwarted in his attachment to his father, a clergyman, who was detached, harsh and even brutal in dealings with his son. Dobrolyubov was very close to his mother, but this relation apparently did not compensate for the thwarting and

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[Dobrolyubov]

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humiliating treatment which Dobrolyubov experienced at the hands of his father. As a reaction to such a family situation, Dobrolyubov developed strong needs for emotional attachment and felt very disillusioned and deeply embittered when his need for dependency was frustrated. When he was sixteen years of age this "forerunner of Bolshevism" wrote in his diary:

> No matter how many attachments I had formed in the past, always the evil fate would whisk the beloved being far away from me; and in my soul remains only the sorrowful memory and bitter realization of my despair . . . I could never live without love, without attachment to someone. This has been so ever since I remember myself. But this constant irony of fate, which makes all my hopes and dreams usually crash into dirt, constantly hardens and chills my heart, and there is nothing surprising in the fact that soon it will be both hard and cold as stone.[5]

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Later, apparently, Dobrolyubov found an outlet for his repressed hostilities, in his writings in which he tended to emphasize the dark sides of Russian society ("Realm of Darkness"). He joined that group of "Nihilists" who excelled in their philosophy of extreme individualism, who attacked the existing society and devised the ways to destroy "coldbloodedly" its very foundations, including the family. It was in this ideology of "Nihilism" that Russian Anarchism as well as Bolshevism have been rooted.

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The demand for unlimited power as a means of compensation for humiliations and deprivations and as a means of satisfying craving for acceptance and support tends to perpetuate a political system which gives one a chance to indulge such needs through relationships of absolute dominance and unconditional submission and through destructive action. Such a social and political structure, in its own turn, tends to reinforce paternal despotism and absolute obedience in the family. In this manner, just as in the society of steppe marauders, power-seeking, mistrust and destructive aggression are perpetuated, become generalized and are manifested in many social relations.

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On the folk level desire for power was manifested, for instance, in the customs connected with childbirth. On that occasion the midwife would place the child on a sheepskin coat or furcoat so

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[Belinsky]
[Nekrasov]
[Herzen]

was to convey to the masses a social message. In their literary essays they stressed the social and political ills of Russia and believed in the Westernization of their country as a way out of its social and political difficulties.

It is reported that Belinsky grew up with the feeling of revolt against the despotism of his father who tyrannized the family. Nekrasov, "at the age of 17 . . . broke with his father whom he detested even as he idolized his mother" . . . And it was Nekrasov who in his writings showed an especially "great and unfeigned compassion for the poor and the suffering" and who "idealized and worshipped the Russian people,"[1] that is, the people who have been exposed to an age long misery. In a similar manner Herzen had generalized his childhood experiences and had transferred his reactions to all human kind. As a child he showed a strong reaction against his "inaccessible" father and a deep sympathy for all those whom his father abused:

> . . . the hushed voices and noiseless steps of the servants were no sign of devotion, but of repression and fear. All impulsiveness and frankness my father disliked and called familiarity; and all display of feeling passed with him for sentimentality. And when this proud old man, with his clear understanding and sincere contempt of mankind, played this part of a passionless judge, whom did he mean to impress by the performance: A woman whose will he had broken, though she never tried to oppose him; a boy whom his own treatment drove from mere naughtiness to positive disobedience; and a score of footmen whom he did not reckon as human beings! . . . Always on his guard, discontented with everyone, he suffered when he saw the feelings he inspired in every member of the household. Smiles died away and talk stopped whenever he came into the room. Stinging mockery and cool contemptuous irony were the weapons which he could wield with the skill of an artist, and he used them equally against us and against the servants. There are few things that a growing boy resents more; and, in fact, up to the time of my imprisonment I was on bad terms with my father and carried on a petty warfare against him, with the men and maids for my allies . . . did I deserve that he should preach even the truth in a manner so repulsive to the heart of youth? His intelligence, chilled by a long life spent in a corrupt society, made him suspicious of all the world; his feelings were not warm and did not crave for reconciliation; and therefore he remained at enmity

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[Herzen]
[Sophia Perovskaya]

with all his fellow creatures . . . I felt intense pity for the old man, but I could do nothing—he was inaccessible.[2]

The liberalizing influences which were penetrating Russia from the West reinforced urges of revolt against despotism as well as feelings of identification with suffering masses. By the second part of the nineteenth century the reaction against the tyrannical family environment and oppressing political system took often an extreme form. It is common knowledge that many Russian terrorists and assassins of the second part of the nineteenth century grew up exposed to constant family tensions and personal humiliations, and sought total destruction of society. Others were inclined to identify themselves with all who were abused. Thus we find the urge for destruction and identification with suffering as fundamental aspects of the ideology of Russian revolutionary movements. For instance, Kropotkin, the outstanding Russian Anarchist directly related his revolutionary activities to his identification with all those who were persecuted. He appealed to all who were exposed to maltreatment to rise against their oppressors:

Ay, all of us together, we who suffer and are insulted daily, we are a multitude whom no man can number. We are the ocean that can embrace and swallow up all else. When we have but the will to do it, that very moment will justice be done; that very instant the tyrants of the earth shall bite the dust.[3]

Or take, for instance, Sophia Perovskaya, one of the plotters in the assassination of Czar Alexander II. According to her biographers her father was a willful despot "such as the patriarchal system alone could have produced," and her mother, "constantly humiliated and insulted," remained at home to protect the children. Thus, in her own family Perovskaya learned to hate oppression and developed her love for the oppressed and weak. For her mother, one of the down-trodden, she had a love "bordering upon adoration."[4] Catherine Breshkovskaya, another outstanding Russian revolutionary, who became known as the "little grandmother of the Russian revolution," tells us in her reminiscences and letters how her childhood experiences affected her feelings, thoughts, and actions throughout her life:

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[Catherine Breshkovskaya]
[Bakunin]

How many times, stupefied and shocked, I have been the witness of such humiliating, degrading, excruciating things! How many times I have thrown myself at my father's feet to implore pardon for a so-called culprit, whose only fault, perhaps, was to have fallen asleep while herding the sheep! How many times I have been indignant to see how hundreds of peasants would be kept waiting in the courtyard, bare-headed and shivering with cold, waiting for the master to appear, after making them wait all day, would send them off without a word, so taken up was he with gambling at cards with other lords, who in their turn were making their coachmen wait on the carriage box till their hands were frozen! These things tormented my childish mind, and pursued me even into my bed, where I would lie awake for hours, unable to sleep for thinking of all the horrors about me. Child as I was, I could not understand why these honest folk should bear the entire burden of work and of taxes. I saw that my father, good though he was, put much more heart into looking after his own interests than the interests of his serfs, and I was shocked at the inequality between the rich and the poor. From the age of eight, how to find justice was the question that troubled me.[5]

Identification with suffering is outstanding in the literary works of Dostoyevsky. Influenced by religious feelings, he considered his own sufferings as a blessing. He identified Russia with crucified Christ and regarded the sufferings of the Russian people as a means by which the wrongs of all mankind will be expiated so that a new and better order will prevail on the earth: "All men will be holy and love one another, and there will be no more rich nor poor, no exulted nor humbled, but all will be as the children of God, and the true Kingdom of Christ will come."[6]

II

Not in all families of Russian intelligentsia was the situation alike. There were families in which harmonious relations prevailed. There were also families in which reaction developed not against the despotism of the father but against the tyranny of the mother. Bakunin, for instance, describes his mother as "a vain, egotistical woman and none of her children loved her."[7] According to Carr, Bakunin "attributed his passion for destruction to the influence of his mother, whose despotic character

6: Tomasic E-4 (1947-1948) 1953 RFI Great Russia RFI

[Bakunin]

[Saint Theodosius]

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inspired him with an insensate hatred of every restriction on liberty."[8]

Identifying himself with all the oppressed, this leading Russian anarchist revolted not only against the family and the state, but against God as well, because God was a symbol of authority and fear. To Bakunin the concept of a God of fear implied abdication of reason and of justice, and was the negation of human liberty. He expounded therefore the overthrow of God as a necessary precondition of human liberation.[9] To Bakunin the revolt of Satan against God was the first attempt of free thought, of science, and of human freedom.[10]

Not unlike this was the reaction of Turgeniev toward the despotism of his mother. This outstanding Russian novelist apparently developed a great compassion for the Russian serfs and became a champion in the struggle for freedom and for the emancipation of the peasants because he identified his own sufferings with the plight of the muzhiks on the estate of his mother. Turgeniev's mother apparently gave vent both on her son and on her serfs for the sufferings of her unhappy married life, and in bringing up her own son she made few concessions. The same excessive strictness that she applied against serfs she exercised also against her own son. "I was flogged almost every day for merest trifles," says Turgeniev.[11]

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An earlier case of reaction against a despotic mother and resulting identification with those who are humiliated is that of Saint Theodosius. This Russian saint was one of the founders of Russian monasticism in the eleventh century. According to Fedotov, the main theme in the hagiography of Theodosius is the "strife with his mother . . . the cruel treatment he endured, and his threefold escape. Many scenes are painted with truly artistic skill, particularly the portrait sketched of the mother, with her passionate transitions from outbursts of anger to caresses, with her appearance as a virago: 'She was strong in body, vigorous as a man: anybody who would not have seen her but only heard her voice would believe it was that of a man.' "[12]

Theodosius reacted to the despotism of his mother by wearing "uncouth and patched garb" like the poor and the beggars to the dismay of his parents, who were well-to-do people and felt hor-

6: Tomasic E-4 (1947-1948) 1953 RF1 Great Russia RF1

[Saint Theodosius]

593 rified by such behavior. After his father's death, Theodosius used
● 159 "to go to the fields with the slaves and work humbly."[13] Later
792 when Theodosius finally escaped from his mother's tyranny by entering a monastery, he became the founder of that school of Russian monastic philosophy which emphasizes self-abnegation and meekness, as well as charitable love and compassion for those who suffer. In that manner Theodosius identified himself and his Church with all those who were tyrannized. But he was also active in protecting those to whom injustice was done. He became "intercessor for many before judges and princes, rescuing people."[14]

152 Deep sympathy for those who suffer and identification with
695 them might explain why the Russian juries and the peasant courts were so ready to acquit the repentants. Juries and courts would often set free criminals who were found guilty by well established evidence. The verdict in such a case might be "not guilty" because of "commiseration for the poor murderer." A jury sitting through Holy Week would tend to acquit everybody, because "at the time of our Lord's Passion, it does not become Christians to condemn their brethren."[15]

152 Sympathy for those who suffer and identification with them
538 is an outstanding trait of Russian literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Russian writings of those days exhibit a preoccupation with great social, political, religious and psychological problems of mankind. They picture a gloomy, painful, and tragic world, full of misery, injustice, blood and death. In the same manner the school textbooks of those days contained many heartbreaking stories full of compassion and commiseration for the suffering, unprotected, weak.

152 When identification with suffering is a manifestation of revolt
783 or is combined with the urge for revolt, strong feelings of guilt
538 might develop. On such grounds compulsion to suffer and to be
668 persecuted might thrive. This "Russian Kenotism" is found among the early Russian monastics[16] as well as among the Russian nineteenth century revolutionaries and men of letters. Some Russian revolutionary factions, for instance, emphasized sacrifice and martyrdom to the point of self-destruction.[17] In the like manner Count Leo Tolstoy claims in his diary that he, "often

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absolute and unconditional liberty and denial of any laws, conventions or obligations.[2] Ideologies which sought universal salvation and identification with Christ's teaching (Dissent, Slavophilism) had their counterparts in the ideologies which demanded universal destruction and identification with anti-Christ (Nihilism, Terrorism).[3]

Among the intelligentsia a lack of a sense for methodical work, and lack of initiative were combined with preoccupation concerning grandiose and utopian plans on a world scale. There was a noticeable lack of preparation for these programs and a tendency to consider that having made plans was equal to their fulfillment. Such traits were so striking among some intelligentsia that they were given a special name (*Oblomovshtina*).[4]

It is known that a number of outstanding Russian intellectuals have shown a remarkable lack of emotional balance in their behavior. These would often move from one ideological camp into that of their bitter opponents. In ideological controversies no tolerance was shown for the opposite point of view. There was a tendency to treat all in the opposite camp as enemies. "Who is not with us is against us," was the principle applied in theory and practice. Some outstanding Russian intellectuals themselves admitted such traits in their character. Dostoyevsky, for instance, analyzing his own feelings stated: "In all things I go to the uttermost extremes; my life long I have never been acquainted with moderation." Not unlike this self-analysis of Dostoyevsky was that of Bakunin. In his "Confession to the Czar" he said: "There was in my character a radical defect: love for the fantastic, for out-of-the-way, unheard of adventures, for undertakings which open up an infinite horizon and whose end no man can foresee."[5]

According to General Golovine among the army officers there was a "tendency to drunkenness, churlishness and tyranny toward their subordinates," but there were also "many heroes among these negative types," and often a "regular officer showed such readiness to sacrifice himself that his superiors were forced to restrain his excessive ardor."[6] Lack of balance and stability was also reflected in the differences between military units. Often "next to a first class regiment there was another completely worthless."[7]

6: Tomasic E-4 (1947-1948) 1953 RF1 Great Russia RF1
[Ivan the Terrible]

convict labor, indicate that the number of such children will not decrease in the foreseeable future.[26]

Such children are considered to have an ideal background for their training as future specialists in conspiracy, vigilance, and violence. Therefore the children who have been raised in a tense family atmosphere or who have been rejected and neglected by their families form a fertile ground from which the Bolshevik rulers recruit a significant part of their future followers and leaders. But what is the future of a society whose ruling classes are being formed out of persons who have been raised in the midst of harshness, brutality and lack of human warmth or whose desire for emotional attachment has been thwarted?

By the middle of the sixteenth century Ivan the Terrible, who himself was left motherless early in his childhood and was exposed to great instability in his emotional attachments, became a victim of ideas of persecution and of boundless and insatiable thirst for power and self aggrandizement. Driven by such compulsions he undertook to organize a body of fanatical devotees who were bound by oath to forswear association not only with "friends and brethren" but even with their own parents, and to serve the Czar blindly and unconditionally. These *Oprichniki* became renowned in history as a brotherhood of brigands who lived separated and isolated from the rest of society—"men vile and filled with every sort of cruelty."[27] Throughout the day they indulged in savage torturing and killing of suspects after they had attended the morning liturgy. In their wild outrages they terrorized peaceful citizens immediately after their brow-beating prostrations before the Altar.

In the same manner in the Ottoman Empire, the elite militia of the Sultans, known as the Janizaries, were recruited from among the children who were often early in their childhood or boyhood taken away from their parents to be raised and trained in loyalty to the Sultan only. Still earlier in the society of Eurasian steppe warriors want of bonds of human attachment brought about instability and explosiveness of Asiatic empires. Both the Asiatic conquerors and the Janizaries became renowned in history for their recklessness and barbarism. They also rebelled and excelled in insubordination to established